

Georgia Tech continues to partner with the Atlanta community in addressing what has become an historic drought – the worst recorded here in 100 years. On Saturday, October 20, 2007, Governor Sonny Perdue declared a state of emergency in most of Georgia and called on President Bush to issue a Federal Disaster Designation. Each of us needs to take personal responsibility for conserving water.

October is historically our driest month, so the situation is not expected to improve in the immediate future and stricter water conservation guidelines may be imposed by the City and/or State in early to mid-November.

The Institute already has taken significant steps to reduce water consumption, such as stopping all outdoor watering from the municipal water supply, aggressively pursuing identification and repair of any water leaks, shutting down campus fountains and banning pressure washing, discontinuing washing campus vehicles (except for refuse trucks due to health concerns and all windshields which must remain clean for safety reasons), and implementing a well to supply our chiller system water instead of using the domestic water supply. Institute departments should do all they can to reduce water consumption without compromising standards of cleanliness, public health and safety.

Georgia Tech began our water conservation efforts as part of the Institute's Sustainability efforts in 1992 and continues to implement and expand them today. We focus on the major uses of water usage such as buildings, irrigation, bathrooms, laundries, and kitchens. Cooling is a major water use in the south and we have also made big water conservation efforts in this infrastructure arena.

Our new buildings include water conservation features such as hands free water faucets, and waterless urinals. We have implemented these low flow fixtures across 80%+ of the housing on campus. University residence and apartment bathrooms are designed for showers rather than baths so conservation is built in. Low flow appliances such as dishwashers and laundry facilities are also part of our implementations.

Harvesting building HVAC condensate water for landscape use reduces our use of potable water for landscaping and protects valuable green assets which help reduce greenhouse gases to improve our campus' and city's air quality. Even while watering with condensate water, we have reduced the amount of water used for irrigation by attaching special watering containers, so-called "Gator Bags," to new plantings and stressed existing plants. Rain gardens and cisterns are landscape features that we have implemented to capture storm water for later use in irrigation and to alleviate storm water runoff thereby relieving the city's overtaxed storm water system.

Our new LEED buildings are approaching water neutrality. Recycling water whenever possible, selecting planting materials that need less watering, implementing designs, equipment, and systems that are water efficient and include water conservation plans in new construction and renovation projects are all integral to our new buildings, retrofits and renovations. We have been implementing our conservation efforts as budgets permit, in particular, when building new buildings or doing renovations.

In terms of infrastructure, upgrades and new equipment installations are multiyear projects. Fortunately Georgia Tech was ahead of the curve. We have upgraded our cooling systems,

cooling towers, repaired leaks in our steam condensate systems, and worked with the city to reduce the number of water system leaks across campus.

Georgia Tech's buildings square footage doubled in the last decade. We have already experienced the benefits of the water conservation built into these new spaces and will continue to do so for the life of these buildings. Additionally, it has changed our way of looking at our whole campus operations. We would have lost valuable old trees this summer and new landscaping assets had it not been for the changes in the way we conserve rain and condensate water from our buildings and adjusted our plantings and landscaping using water conservation processes.

As a result of the increased pressures of this 100 year drought and the pressures on Georgia's infrastructures (due in part to the massive population increase in Georgia and Metropolitan Atlanta over the last 15 years), we are evaluating our options to accelerate our efforts. We will immediately post signs at water fixtures encouraging reduced water consumption and reduce water consumption through use of water restriction devices in any remaining older style commodes. Our students have been leaders in sustainability through activities such as Earth Day, ongoing recycling, Engineers without Borders, the Solar Decathlon, Game Day recycling and many more activities. Students living in our Residence Halls have already received emails from the Georgia Tech Housing Department recommending ways to reduce their water usage. A similar email was sent to fraternity and sorority leaders.

The Institute's Task Force on Water Resources will issue a written report in mid-November in which it will make recommendations to further reduce water use in the event of increased City or State mandated water restrictions, as well as recommendations regarding sustained water conservation.

The Task Force fully recognizes, however, the necessity for implementing further water saving practices immediately, and therefore urges everyone to incorporate the following common sense practices into their daily routines at work and at home:

1. reduce water usage to the maximum extent feasible in work and research-related activities;
2. limit showers to two to five minutes and use water only for wetting and rinsing;
3. do not leave water running while brushing teeth, shaving, soaping hands, or washing dishes;
4. avoid flushing toilets multiple times;
5. operate washers and other cleaning appliances with full loads only;
6. turn off all faucets tightly; and
7. Immediately report any leaks to building administrators, your Facilities Area Manager (http://www.facilities.gatech.edu/om/area_contacts.pdf). After regular business hours, you may call (404) 894-2500 to report maintenance emergencies.

For additional tips, consult the Institute's water crisis website at <http://gatech.edu/conservation/>.

We are also encouraging our students, faculty, and staff to work with their families, extended families, neighbors, churches and other community organization to implement water saving toilets, showers, faucets, and to change habits today because each day delayed has such a big impact for the immediate water shortages. Additionally, all changes today will pay big dividends over time. It is already clear that water shortages will continue for years, while regional infrastructure, policies, and solutions are implemented.

Some of you may have heard rumors that the ongoing drought may cause some other universities in our state to suspend classes. These are just rumors. While the universities are partnering with the city in addressing the crisis and taking extraordinary measures to conserve water, closing of the Institute or altering the academic schedule is not viewed as a practical solution to the current level of crisis. The water crisis affects much of Georgia, where most of students live. Many of students live in off-campus apartments or housing in the community. It appears that shutting a university would shift the water-usage load, but would not greatly decrease the total amount of water used, while resulting in some very significant academic and economic negatives. If the crisis deepens to an even more extraordinary level, then it might be time for such a discussion. But it is our hope and expectation that conservation measures such as those outlined above will enable us to get through this crisis without such a major disruption.

It is the duty of each member of the Institute community to become educated about the severity of the situation and be consciously conservative in water use. Every drop of water saved adds up and our students, faculty, and staff are known as being leaders in sustainability.

The university will continue to monitor its usage of water and will make every effort to comply with City directives. ***All university classes and sponsored activities are expected to continue as planned.***